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Women Of The South
1861-1865.

WOMEN OF THE SOUTH

1861-1865

BY

AGNES WRIGHT

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FOR THE

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Agnes Wright

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IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

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WOMEN OF THE SOUTH

1861 - 1865

I. Introduction

Southern writers have always praised the courage and ingenuity of Southern women. To them "Southern Women" have been italicized into a homogenous group, thinking and acting as one. To them apparently, social position, economic status, and geographic position were of no account; they see only that the women of '61 were welded together by the fire of their experiences, into a unit. They do not see that the unit was not coherent. For back of the common enthusiasm, analysis reveals sharp lines of cleavage, lines drawn by class by economic interests, by environment. Though Southern women had a common ancestry—cool-nerved, iron-willed pioneers, English, Scotch, and Scotch-Irish for the most part; yet the Southern, aristocratic construction of society early set up barriers of class between them. Not only were there the blue-bloods, the middle class, and the poor whites, but each of these was subdivided.

The aristocrats of Richmond, New Orleans, or Charleston,—wealthy, accomplished, sophisticated—differed from each other, but they differed vastly more from the wealthy, aristocratic mistresses on the huge plantations of the South. Joel Chandler Harris has described the popular picture of the life of these latter ladies as "a state of idleness, languishing in hammocks, while bevies of pickaninies cooled the tropical air about her with long handled fans made

of peacock tails." On the contrary the life of the mistress of a well-ordered plantation was arduous; no woman worked harder than she, in caring for the childlike dependents in the slave quarters—their health, their food, their clothing.

Such a sharp division in the interests of the upper class, was not to be found in the middle class on the farms. Life on one small farm in any of the border states was much like that on another. The middle class in the towns was numerically, almost negligible. Side by side with the aristocrat and the middle class, were to be found, throughout the South, "the po' white trash," as the negro slaves contempuously called them. The Georgia cracker, or clayeater, stolid, sullen, shiftless, and her counterpart throughout the South has never been deciphered by her neighbors. Anomaly though she is, she and her sisters make up one of the groups found in "Women of the South."

The physical geography of the country did not amalgamate; it emphasized, became itself a factor in the difference of its people. Along the seacoast the broad lowlands, backed by the Appalachians, were divided by rivers into self-sufficient parallelograms. Southern cities were situated a few miles up these streams. The fact that they were the center of what industrial life the South had, and that they were easy of access, made them the logical points of attack during the war. The life of townswomen was thus inevitably most intimately affected throughout this period.

From the western slope of the Appalachians across the Mississippi valley swept the agricultural land of the South, only broken by hamlets and villages. The inhabitants knew little of the town and plantation life of the sea-board—hardly more than did the

isolated mountaineers.

The Federal attack was aimed at the sea-board and the border; it formed a ring about the South, and the Confederates, massed within a circumscribed space, defended themselves from within a circle. The Federals constantly strove to reduce the circle; the Confederates more desperately, if possible, fought to prevent this constriction.

It was this disposition of the fighting forces that caused the war experiences of women to differ so widely with the region. On the circumference of the circle women touched hands with the worst of war. On the interior of it they were shut in by the far away battle lines and by blockade as thoroly as a Chinese wall. Until Sherman drove his wedge, three hundred miles[1] in width, down thru that region, economic pressure, and newspaper accounts were women's most intimate contact with war.

Thus, it happened, that thruout this period, the most evident difference among Southern women was to be found in their geographic situation, tho the other differences were not absent. This paper, then, will consider, first, conditions of life in the blockaded interior, and, second, that of towns and cities; it will then attempt to picture the more typical services of women for the soldiers; and will, in the final section try to portray the spirit that animated the women of the South during that period.

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1. The country most directly concerned was that "of a region 30 miles either side of a line from Atlanta to Savannah," as Sherman says in his official report. But his operations before he began his march thru Georgia, and flank movements on either side of the line of march did affect an area 300 miles wide.

II. Life and Industry in the Blockaded Interior.

As a result of these conditions of geography and blockade, ordinary affairs of life in the inland states were not greatly touched by the war. In many quiet valleys master and slave were as contented as before hostilities began.[1] And on some plantations, as late as January, 1865, the closest scrutiny could detect no change in the manner of living. "The same retinue of servants came into the house to see and shake hands with mistress" (visiting) neice, and after many questions—retired with the same courtesy that had marked their demeanor in ante-bellum days."[2]

Not that these people were lacking in feeling, but not forced to bear the full brunt of the war, they were able to realize its force only when they themselves faced its horrors.[3]

But their lives were "strenuous"to a degree never before dreamed of. With war, all the man enlisted. Straightway, to the ordinary duties of women, were added those dropped by the men.

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1. Hague, P. A., A Blockaded Family, p. 119.

2. Gay, Mary A. H., Life in Dixie During the War, p. 269.

3. The country friend of a woman shut up in starving Richmond could ask her in the role of a humble Marie Antoinnette, why she did not use milk since tea and coffee were not to be had. "And it was eighteen months since we had seen a cup of milk," exclaims her friend. (McGuire, passim.)

"The census of 1860 shows that in North Carolina there were, between the ages of 20 and 60--the limits of military service --128,889 men. Subtract from this number the 125,000 men furnished the Confederacy by that state, and the subtraction reveals that there were in the borders of it only 3,889 men who first and last were not in some form of military service. Hence the women of the state and the 3,889 men had to do as best they could the work that would have fallen on the shoulders of the absent 125,000 men."[1]

With such conditions as these to face, no woman could be idle. Busy as the plantation mistress had been before the war, she must have now regarded those times as a mere training school for her present duties. Often she and her young children were the only white persons on the place,—which might mean also, the only ones for miles around. She must issue the rations, superintend the cooking, prevent waste. She must assign the morning and evening tasks, and make sure that they were performed. Her oversight was necessary in the carding, the spinning, the weaving, and the dyeing of materials for clothing, as well as in the cutting and the fashioning of garments. There were shoes to be made and mended. There were necessary inspections of the slave quarters to see that they were in order, and that the sick were well cared for.[2] Further, the mistress had to ride over the plantation almost daily on a tour of inspection, and must hear each evening, a report of what had been done in the fields.

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1. Bulletin 16, N. C. Historical Commission,--p. 15.
2. Ibid, p. 14.

Finally, when all these "ordinary" duties[1] were accomplished, there remained the duty to the State, the collecting of the war tax of 1/10 in kind.[2] The mistress, as the only adult white person on the plantation attended the gathering and measuring of every crop, and saw that the tenth was delivered to government authorities.[3]

Nor did these women slight their tasks. Crops did not lessen under their management. They fed and clothed women, childran and infirm men at home, and supplied in addition, the armies in the field.

This work was done, on the larger plantations, by the thousands of blacks under supervision. Women on the small farms, however, who did not possess servants, were reduced to the necessity of doing all outside work with their own hands. Conditions varied in the different sections, but probably in most there were to be seen, as in Tennessee "Many a woman who never before held a plough--now in the cornfield.....many a Ruth as of old.....binding and gleaning in the wheat fields."[4]

To add to the difficulties of the unaccustomed labor in the fields, wheat, so necessary now, was a new grain to many sec-

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1. Clayton, Mrs. V. V., pp. 114-115: "On going to town one day I discovered a small bridge over which we had to pass that needed repairing. It was almost impassible. I went home, called some of our own men, and gave them instructions to get up the necessary articles and put the bridge in condition to be passed over safely. I was there giving instructions about the work, when an old gentlemen, our Probate Judge came along—to see what we were doing. When satisfied he said to me: "Madam, I think we will never be conquered possessing such noble women as we do!"

2. The tax varied, but one-tenth was common in many states as in Alabama, Texas.

3. Clayton, Mrs. V. V., <u>White and Black Under the Old Regime</u>, pp. 123 and passim.

4. Charleston Courier, Jul.,1864 (Reb.Rec. V. 7, p. 43.)

tions of the South. Its production was necessary. But how was it to be threshed? One woman devised a scheme by which she could thresh as much as a bushel or two at one time. Taking a sheaf of wheat in her hands she would seat herself in a chair in front of a barrel within good striking distance, and would belabor that barrel to such purpose that the grains showered down on the sheets arranged to catch them. "She then spread the sheets out on the ground in the open air, and poured the wheat on them in a continuous stream," the wind acting as a "great fan" to carry off the chaff. Another woman placed the wheat in troughs and she and her children, after the ancient fashion, would beat it out with wooden flails or mauls.[1]

With all the unaccustomed duties in the fields, household tasks—tasks which are usually ordinary ones, claimed attention in a hitherto unknown manner; indeed, household affairs were no longer ordinary,—were in fact extraordinary, for the blockade was an ever present reality. It met them in the kitchen, in the parlor, "and in my lady's chamber." Four years were none too long to solve the problems it presented.

Shut up within themselves, the women became absorbed—engrossed—in these economic problems. The blockade threw down the gauntlet to their ingenuity and invention; they received it gallantly; they turned a battle into a thrilling game; they supplied not only necessities, but "frills."

Everybody,—every class,— shared in the problem. The South was a people of a single industry; farming was practically the only gainful occupation. "We grew cotton, but New and Old Eng-

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1. Hague, passim.

land spun, wove, dyed and profited by it. We cultivated tobacco for others to manufacture. Trees crowded our fields, but we bought our furniture;.....'for manufactured articles from linch-pins to locomotives, from boats to buttons, from flannels to fans, from pens to plows,' we were dependent on outside markets."[1]

But now the blockade forced them to be a people of diversified industry. Forced them suddenly and rudely,—to make for themselves those numerous things consumed each day, that formerly they got elsewhere. They must do it at once; and most women then knew no more how to make the material for their clothing, knew no more how to manufacture and substitute food stuffs, knew no more how to prepare drugs than would the woman today. But those women learned. The women of the interior were the economic backbone of the Confederacy.

As soon as the supply of clothing in the stores began to fail, old spinning frames and looms were put into use. "It had not been so many years since every Virginia farm owned a house for a great cumbrous loom. The door of the loom-house was again opened and the weaver installed on her high bench;"[2] not only in Virginia but throughout the South was this true.

Everywhere the busy whirl of the spinning wheel and the heavy, regular sound of the loom were heard. The few who knew taught the many who were ignorant of these primitive problems. Great ingenuity was expended at every step of the carding, spinning

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1. Hill, D. H., The Women of the Confederacy, Bul. 16, N. C. Historical Commission, p. 16.

2. Pryor, Mrs. Roger A., Reminiscences of Peace and War, p. 266.

and weaving. During the four years of enforced industry, Southern women achieved a really remarkable skill in those crafts.[1] They knew many different ways of weaving and showed the greatest fertility in making designs. "We made cloth in stripes broad and narrow and in checks wide and small. We made plain cloth, twilled cloth, jeans, and salt-and-pepper cloth.[2] Plaids were woven of wool and cotton thread, and required three or four shuttles, and as many varieties of color. We had dice-woven homespun, or basket plaid, chambreys and flannels—both cotton and woolen." The flannels were excellent for capes, cloaks, and even blankets. In weaving this material they were very particular to raise the lint, so that a flannel jacket, dyed dark brown, was sometimes mistaken for seal skin.[3]

All this weaving concerned itself with every day, rough cloth, but they did not confine themselves to coarse yarns. Old silken garments were painstakingly separated, thread by thread, and woven into new fabrics, gloves, or stockings. For their finest work the women themselves selected the largest, fullest bolls from the cotton fields before any rain had fallen, and picked the seeds

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1. The newspapers took a lively interest in unique or bizarre experiments. The Richmond Despatch tells of a pair of socks Pres. Davis received knit entirely of the curls taken from the back of a pet dog.....A woman in Tenn. had found that a mixture of cow's hair and cotton spun together made a very good substitute for wool. "The ladies of the South are showing a commendable effort to turn everything to account....and to thwart the inconvenience of the blockade," it adds.

2. The salt-and-pepper cloth was made "by alternating one thread of black the width and length of the warp and the same in the woof....The shuttles with the quills of black and white thread, were changed at every tap of the batten." What strange craft words to ears but 50 years removed from their use!

3. Hague, p. 94-98, passim.

out by hand. They also sorted the wool after shearing and took the softest, silkiest locks for knitting and crocheting.[1]

Once all this material was spun it must be dyed. How should these women solve the problem?

For dyeing the ugly, home woven materials they used barks, leaves, roots and berries containing coloring properties. Indigo grew wild in the woods, or could be cultivated in one's garden. A beautiful clear blue was extracted from it by allowing the fibers to ferment in vats of water and to precipitate their blue particles in a heavy "mud," which could be dried and kept indefinitely. Butternut hulls supplied a rich brown dye. Willow, and maple bark, as well as the myrtle shrub found in such abundance in the south, gave different shades of gray. Tho poke berries gave a brilliant red, the color could not be used on wash fabrics. But a strong decoction of pine tree roots yielded a beautiful garnet, and by proper dilution any shade up to pink could be obtained from it. Black was got from walnut bark or, better, a jet black could be obtained from a weed called "Queen's Delight," which grew very sparsely in the woods. A light, clear green could be obtained from hickory bark, if one had a bit of alum to set the color.

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1. It is interesting to note the effort these women made to put the stamp of the artistic—the beautiful—on their work. No pains were spared to approximate the fine and beautiful to which they had been accustomed. On knitted articles, "a border of vines, with green leaves and rosebuds of bright colors, was deftly knitted," as part of the garment. "A pleasant rivalry arose, as to who could form the most unique bordering for capes and shawls,.....There were squares, diamonds, crosses, bars.....of different colors."

In their weaving they went to the greatest trouble to procure a beautiful effect. Scraps of bright cassimere were often snipped up and woven thru the fabric. Old party dresses of tarleton were ripped up for hat trimming, and" neighbors would divide with neighbor" her supply.

A mordant for fixing most dyes was made by placing in a cask of salty water, wherein a little vinegar was added, pieces of rusty, useless iron. After it was allowed to stand some little time, this homely copperas was found quite effective--and was always ready.[1]

Gathered, carded, spun, woven and dyed, one might hopefully regard difficulties as passed, but not so; the material must now be sewed—and where was the cotton thread? Spools of Coats did not long outlive the blockade. The thrums from each web of cloth knotted together and wound on a spool served the purpose so far as they lasted; a good needleful could be got between knots. But after that, the supply must be spun. A wearisome task it was, for the thread must be both fine and even. Try as they would it was continually snapping, and so was full of knots.[2]

Buttons to fasten the finished garments were of every variety. They were made of homespun thread twisted very hard, knotted, and thickly worked over with stitches. They were made of pine bark, and of the shell of the common gourd. Covered paste board could be used on garments not requiring washing. But the persimon seed buttons were especially successful for they withstood the hardest wear.[1]

The problem of fabric making—cotton, woolen, and silk—, made into every article—sheets, blankets, carpets, dress-material—was solved. But foot wear and head gear had to be provided.

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1. Hague, passim. cf. Pryor; Welsh; passim.

2. It was, of course, impossible to use such thread on a machine. Thruout the war all garments had to be made by hand.

The making of shoes—and the leather for them[1] —was an unaccustomed task. The village cobbler, and the plantation shoemaker had supplied the slaves. But most shoes were imported. Now, with both shoes and leather shut out, nearly every farm set up a miniature tannery. So great was the demand that unusual skins had to be resorted to.

"Squirrel skins make excellent leather, stronger and tougher than calf skin. Four skins made a pair of ladies shoes.... Ladies of the interior counties are wearing these shoes and find the them equal in softness, and superior in durability to any others. Our readers will do well to try it," recommends the Richmond Whig for August 21, 1862. Attempts to utilize pig skin for shoes failed, for it retained its shape not at all.

Women sent to the village or plantation shoemaker for footwear—shoes made from the skins of oxen roughly tanned and made up by him. "Some idea of the fit of his handiwork may be formed when it is known that his boast was that it was unnecessary for him to take measurements of the feet of the ladies. 'I 'jest have ter glarnce at your foot missis, an' I ken fit it.'"[2]

Very often, however, the women knit their own shoes of home dyed, home spun thread, either cotton or wool. When taken off the needles they bound the upper edges with cloth,[3] and they were

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1. In N. C. in 1860 there were only 19 small tanneries.

2. Smedes, S. P., A Southern Plantation, p. 190-191.

3. The fact that the "trimmings" were never omitted throws an interesting side light on the "eternal feminine." For the shoes,"a rosette was formed of some stray bits of ribbon or scraps of merino or silk, and placed on the uppers of the slippers." Yards and yards of crocheted "chains" were applied as braiding to waists and skirts. The fast colored blue thread of pillow ticking

then ready for the soles.

Sometimes the cobbler put on the new soles for them, but often they themselves cut the soles from home tanned leather, perforated it around the edge, and completed the shoe entire. They became very dexterous at stitching and turning them—for these shoes wore out very fast.[1] If an old pair of shoes were found whose soles could stand new uppers, the stitches were carefully picked out, and the knitted uppers neatly attached.

Every scrap of heavy twilled cloth--poplin, broadcloth, cassimere from former days was treasured for shoes. Sometimes a piece of heavy osnaburg, or a bit of canvas could be secured . A very serviceable pair of shoes resembling the modern sport shoe would result, but such good luck was uncommon.[2]

The making of headwear was comparatively simple. Boys caps could be made of home spun and everyone plaited and braided hats of straw or palmetto.[3] Quaker or Shaker bonnets were sometimes made of bulrushes. Oat or wheat straw and even corn huskes were

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was unraveled and used to embroider white waists. They made elaborate fans of peacock, goose, or duck feathers. Hoop skirts were in demand, and every effort was made to preserve the old, and make new ones.

1. Hague, 54; Welsh, cf; McGuire, passim.

2. Ibid. p. 54, 152. ef. Welsh, p. 108. McGuire, p. 257. A friend gave one lady an old sail from a river vessel and thus settled the shoe question for her.

3. Then there was the "bonnet-squash" known also as the "Spanish dish-rag," that was sometimes cultivated for making bonnets and hats. Such hats were said to present a fine appearance, but they were rather heavy.

utilized for hats. Those of "pine straw"—the long needles of the Southern pine—were perhaps the most durable.

The blockade thus made it imperative that women make every article of clothing; cloth, shoes, stockings, hats, gloves, and buttons. But the blockade made a problem of food, also. There was always plenty to eat in the blockaded South,[1] of a kind. But many things deemed necessary to the merest comfort were not to be had. Southern writers without exception, bewail the lack of coffee. The want of that beverage they felt more keenly, perhaps, than any other single article. Coffee was hoarded and mixed with substitutes --and bitter it was to them, when all too soon, only the substitute was served. They made "Postum" of many kinds. They found mature okra seeds, nicely browned, to be most like coffee.[2] But a mixture of meal and molasses, browned together in the oven, or meal from dried cubes of sweet potato, was sometimes preferred. Peanuts, browned wheat, meal and burnt corn were all used. Everything was tried;[3] burnt cornbread, burnt molasses, rye (when it was to be had) and even dried English peas.

They tried almost as many things for tea. The young leaves of raspberry, blackberry, huckleberry, orange and holly trees were dried, and brewed for tea. Sassafras, and catnip tea

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1. Miss Hague gives the rations of slaves, and their Sunday treat of "flour, butter, lard, sugar, and some substitute for coffee. They had the privilege also of vegetables and fruits." Then she tells of the annual barbecues "that each and all planters gave their slaves when the crops had been laid by and describes one in which a whole dressed beef, mutton and shoats were roasted." The tables would be loaded down with great pans of chicken pies, as well as fruits, vegetables and light bread and cakes.

2. Hague, p. 102. passim.

3. Welsh, p. 102, 103: cf. Clayton, p. 119.

were also made; some even liked them, they naively confess.[1]

A refreshing and appetizing drink, metheglin, was made of honey; if allowed to ferment it made excellent vinegar.

Though some of these drinks might be excellent substitutes for better things, what were any of them without sweetening? White sugar was not to be had; and though every effort was made to have the brown sugar as "light" as possible, it could not take the place of white sugar.[2] With their limited means of transportation, those parts of the South which did not raise sugar were "put to it" for any kind of sweetening.[3]

If coffee and tea without sugar was insipid, what of food without salt? But soon there was no salt in the inland communities. The cheapest household commodity became the most costly; for there was no substitute for salt. All the salt shaken off the dry pork was saved; all the brine boiled, skimmed, and dried out. "But still the cry was salt."--How was it to be gotten? In that dire strait,

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1. These writers have a delightful fashion of specifying just what was being substituted. For instance raspberry leaves took the place of green tea, and blackberry leaves were black tea. It would scarcely be surprising if some were named "Orange-Pekoe" and others "English Breakfast."

2. "Sugar was used in so many different ways that how to make it last was a problem. Molasses could be, and was used in many unusual ways. It was, therefore, as precious as sugar before sorghum began to be raised; consequently cakes, preserves, sweetmeats of all kinds came to be rare luxuries. Many farmers kept stands of bees, and excellent tea cakes were made with honey. There was plenty of fruit, and peach preserves made with honey were of a superior quality. We dried our own fruit. Figs boiled a few minutes in molasses, then dried and packed away for winter use were sweetmeats much enjoyed by children and grownups too. For table use, honey in the comb and strained honey supplied to the place of molasses for those who liked it."

3. For instance, experiments with water-melon juice boiled down were tried. (Welch, p. 103. Hague, p. 31.)

suddenly information flashed from farm to farm that the dirt floors of old smoke-houses were so many little salt mines; that if they were dug up, the dirt put into hoppers and run down after the manner of leaching ashes, the brine boiled down and dried out, the result would be salt. Directly every farm established its salt works.[1]

Fruit was plentiful in the South; the women canned it and dried it. The pulp of peaches was dried to flat cakes, called "peach leather" and packed away for winter use. When now and then they allowed themselves a fruit cake, dried persimmons took the place of dates;[2] and dried cherries and whortle berries were used in place of raisons.[3] They made gallons of wine from the scuppernong and other grapes each year.[4]

Every household made starch. Bran, wheat flour or grated green corn was put into water, allowed to ferment, was skimmed, strained, and the moisture allowed to evaporate. The starch was quite as effective as the manufactured article.

To contain these foods that had to pass thru so many processes before they were ready for consumption, the housewife had the store of dishes that had been hers at the outbreak of the war. But after the pitcher has gone enough times to the well, it breaks; and precious dishes, panes of glass and other articles would get broken. There was no LePage's, or cement around the corner. But, the Southern ladies found a substitute. They mashed a hot baked, Spanish potatoe, mixed it with a spoonful of flour,

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1. Welsh, p. 104-5. ef. Hague, p. 39.
2. Welsh, p. 104.
3. McGuire.
4. Clayton, p. 122.

and applied "while warm to whatever need there was. This paste, when it had become hardened, remained fixed and firm, and was as durable as putty.[1]

With supper eaten, and the dishes done, the evening lay before the housewife for knitting, and spinning or some other duty. But for any of them she must have light. She invented a variety of expedients. Cotton seed, and peanut oil were used instead of kerosene. Candle moulding again became a household task; the finished product was hung on trees to bleach. The home-made candles were often as white and transparent as the manufactured sperm or wax tapers.

A fairly satisfactory light was obtained by doubling several strands of coarse, softly twisted thread into a line eight or ten yards long, and drawing it through melted beeswax. When cold it was wrapped around a corn cob, with the last end left standing up a few inches.[2]

If neither oil for lamps, nor tallow for candles was to be had, mother wit came to the rescue with further suggestions. A shallow bowl was filled with melted lard and lighted balls from the sweet gum tree set afloat in it. When thoroly saturated they gave "a soft, fairy like light, and floated around in the shallow vessels like stars."[3]

The making and doing of the absolutely essential was not enough for these women; they felt the need of utilizing their

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1. Hague, p. 103-104.
2. Welsh, p. 105. cf. Hague, p. 105, 106.
3. Hague, p. 105.

spare time! Nothing seemed too big—or too little[1]—for them to attempt. They learned to make pottery, which tho "rough, coarse, and brown, with an enamel which would have caused a smile of disdain from the ancient Etruscans "was indispensable in taking the place of tins that wore out or cups and saucers, wash bowls and milk crocks that had got beyond mending.[2] Willow wicker-work became quite an industry, also, and they made baskets of many shapes.[2]

The fact that medicines were contraband made it necessary for "herb-doctors" and folk and Indian lore to instruct the people as to the medicinal value of plants to be found in the woods and fields.

The castor-oil plant grew wild, and was now cultivated in gardens. The oil from the beans was as thick and transparent as that sold by druggists.[3] A substitute for quinine was found in the

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1. Mrs. Ripley (p. 276) says that thorns were used for hairpins, and that an althea switch made a fairly good tooth brush.
Miss Hagne gives a recipe for hair oil--a bowl filled with fragrant rose leaves covered with fresh melted lard all covered with glass and set in the sun for several weeks--until the leaves become crisp and transparent.
Very good pasteboard was made by alternating paper and cloth with paste until of the required thickness and then pressed with a hot iron until dry and glossy. (Hagne, 71.) They mixed soot and oil together for shoe blacking, put it on the shoes with a coating of thin, clear starch to achieve a "shine." Ink, colored with indigo or berry juice was made from oak and cedar balls. Envelopes were shaped by a tin model, and gummed with flour paste or rosin; inside was a scrap of wall paper, with a message written on the wrong side, with the aid of a goose quill for pen.
To secure a substitute for bicarbonate of soda they used the ashes of corn cobs.

2. Hague, p. 48-61.

3. The beans were crushed in a mortor from which the oil passed thru a small orifice near the base. "Water was then added to the oil, heated to the boiling point, impurities strained off, and the oil dipped from the top of the water. (Hague, p. 33.)

berries from the dogwood tree. A soothing cordial was made from blackberry roots, but a better one from ripe persimmons. An extract from the bark of the wild cherry, dogwood, poplar and wahoo trees was used for chills and ague. And a "soothing syrup" for coughs and colds and all lung diseases was made with the leaves and roots of the mullein plant, globe flower and wild cherry tree.

Poppies were often grown in gardens in order to extract opium or to make laudanum from them.[1]

When the women of the interior performed these tasks; when they worked in the fields from seed time to harvest; when they supervised, cared for and directed the thousands of negroes; when they manufactured clothing of every kind, and in every particular; when they labored to produce, or find substitutes for foodstuffs; when they managed to contrive the thousand and one articles used in every day life; when, in short they filled every moment of every waking hour with exacting toil, it was not with aversion of spirit. They welcomed every task.[2]

For with mind and body taxed with performing homely duties, they had less opportunity to brood over the misfortunes of war; they could not indulge a despairing grief over the loss of husband, father, brother and friend.

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1. "The manner of extracting opium from poppies was of necessity crude.....The heads, or bulbs of the poppies were plucked when ripe, the capsules pierced with a large sized sewing needle, and the bulbs placed in some small vessel (a cup or saucer would answer) for the opium gum to exude and to become inspissated by evaporation. The soporific influence of this drug was not excelled by the imported article." Hague, p. 47.

2. Welch, passim. cf. McGuire, Hague, Clayton, passim.

III.

Their Life and Industry in Towns and Cities.

In war time the life in towns and cities is not less, but more diversified than ordinarily. The South was no exception, for most places of any size had the spice of raids, bombardments, shellings, training of recruits, hospital service, privation of all sorts, and, toward the last, the well-founded fear of starvation. This paper will not attempt to describe the life of those women who were, in the most literal sense homeless and penniless from the burning or destruction of their homes,[1] or were living destitute in towns that had surrendered to the Federal forces.[2]

It will deal with the more ordinary life of citizens; the life of the very poor; the life of those who, formerly living in comfort, were now reduced to straits in order to secure the most frugal livlihood; and the life of those who, still retaining means to live in luxury, either so did live, or voluntarily renounced comfort to help their country.

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1. When Baton Rouge was bombarded, the inhabitants, almost entirely women and children fled from the town to escape the shells. Several women were killed and wounded, children were drowned in their flight, and babies were born in the woods. Women on their deathbeds, were carried away in buggies, to be left in some spot a little re - moved, to die. The roads were filled with women walking, and riding away from their homes to become refugees elsewhere. (Dawson, S. M. A Confederate Girl's Diary. pp. 30-50, passim.)

2. As most such places had been stripped bare of every eatable by foragers, the women lived on rations supplied each one who called personally and took the Oath of Allegiance. This ration was sometimes not fit for use; that at Petersburg being a "stinking fish.....and meal thru which hairy caterpillars were jumping. (Pryor, p. 377.)

The want of the very poor, wives of poor private soldiers, for the most part, was desperate; it even culminated in riots in many places. The thin upper stratum of the very wealthy, in large measure wives of civil and military officials, managed a near approach to luxury thru all this period. Between the two extremes was the great body of striving, sorrowing, ministering, all but starving women, whose lives made up the norm of existence. The clerical work of the Government; the making and signing of those uncounted treasury notes; the making of gunpowder at the Nitre and Mining Bureau; the manufacture of cartridges and shells at the Arsenals; the preparing of bandages and lint for the hospitals; the fashioning of clothing and uniforms[1] for the soldiers; these were the occupations of the great number of women.

As the currency continued to depreciate, it became more and more imperative that some occupation be found to create an income; and of course as the demand rose the supply of lucrative positions decreased. At the present time, when every woman does, and wishes to do something,it is difficult to realize how revolutionary it was for women to be actively engaged in labor for profit. At that time not only was it, in any place, remarkable to see women working, but in the South it was extraordinary. It has to be remembered how slavery affected the attitude towards all labor, in order to understand the feeling of southern women, now engaged in labor. "Our ladies," one writer[2] says "who have been brought up in the greatest luxury, are

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1. The government employed 4000 women at one warehouse for the making of soldiers clothing. (Jones, Rebel, War Clerk's Diary, V.II., p. 357.)

2. McGuire, p. 238

working with their hands to assist their families. The offices given to ladies have been filled long ago, and yet I hear of a number of applicants--one office will bring a hundred applications..... I went to see Mrs. _____ today, daughter of one of our gentlemen high in position and whose husband was a wealthy landholder in Maryland. I found her at her sewing machine making an elaborate shirt-bosom. She said she took in sewing, and spoke of it very cheerfully. "How can we rent rooms and live on captain's pay?" She began by sewing for brothers and cousins, then for neighbors, and now for anybody who will give it to her------We certainly are a <u>great people</u>, women as well as men. This lady, and all other ladies have always places at their frugal tables for hungry soldiers."

Many women did copying. Plaiting straw hats was an industry. "Several of us are engaged in making soap and selling it..... A lady who has been perfectly independent in her circumstances..... has been very successful in making pickles and catsups for the restaurants. Another rejoices in her success in making gooseberry wine." "The exercise of this kind of industry," the lady adds apparently in justification, "works two ways; it supplies our wants, and gives comfort to the public."

The wide divergence of ordinary times between gentility and want, became, in the course of the war, narrowed to a slight margin. A tiny patch of garden was watched with anxiety like that bestowed on a loved, but ailing child;[1] for a few tomato plants, a patch of lettuce, a half dozen hills of beans, meant almost as much to the

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1. Jones, <u>A Rebel War Clerk's Diary</u>, passim.

lucky owner as did her huge salary in Confederate notes. The shops in a city like Richmond, deprived of its source of supply for commodities were a god-send to those with a stock of household goods or trunks of old finery. The market for such things never failed; the few with ready money paid any price to get that which they wished; a and a set of dishes, some kitchen chairs, or the furnishings of an ancient party gown might keep the wolf still sniffing at the door instead of entering to devour.[1]

Smuggled goods tended to relieve the worst pressure; some articles, and necessary ones at that, could be obtained in no other way. In such frugal days the gift of smuggled tea, a pair of shoes, or paper of pins, helped to make wartime comfort possible. As a means of conveying these contraband goods, the garments of those days were extremely useful—especially the hoop-skirt. A market woman driving sedately along in her little cart (which had a double bottom between which all sorts of delightful things might be concealed) lifted the edge of her hooped petticoat, revealing a roll of army cloth,[2] several pairs of cavalry boots, a roll of crimson flannel, packages of gilt braid and sewing silk, cans of preserved meats, a bag of coffee.[3]

Important as was self-reliance, it was not always suffi-

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1. Pryor, p. 267.

2. All material not already made into clothing was contraband. But the prevalence of gray cloaks and petticoats among traveling ladies must have struck the Federal searchers; and when the ladies arrived in Dixie their garments under went a transformation and reached camps in the guise of jackets and trousers.

3. McGuire, p. 184.

cient. Fortunate, indeed,was she whose country friends sent a hamper of supplies now and then. With a ham in the larder one could claim a position of positive affluence. The ephemeral character of the position is granted; but stability was not usually a quality of war-time. The distance between comfort and want was bridged by the least misfortune. Let the wage earner become ill, and women who had known only the luxuries and refinements of living counted themselves fortunate to find a place in the poorest tenements.

Such a family of five lived in a single room in a damp basement, the mother and three daughters cooking and washing there where the father lay ill. Another family of four women barely existed on the tiny salary that one daughter earned in the note-signing department.[1]

Where heroic private enterprise could do no more, the power of public organization was resorted to. In Richmond, associations were formed to supply the very poor with meal and wood; but they could alleviate but little of the poverty. One woman could not get bread for her children but she "got turnip-tops from her piece of garden, which was putting up smartly, and she boiled them, with a little salt, and fed them that.....It is something to go upon for awhile, but it doesn't stick by us like as bread does."[1]

Dried peas, bread, and sorghum were the mainstay of many. A soup was devised from tallow, persimmons, and sorghum. One woman declared she could make fifteen different dishes from dried apples. Ham bones, stripped of every possible morsel of meat, fat, or gristle by hungry teeth, were boiled for soup. Children and grownups picked

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1. McGuire, p. 253.

2. Again and again the statement is made that the children

up every grain of corn left by army horses; they were washed and ground for meal.[1] One woman says that with all their starvation they never ate rats, mice, or mule meat, tho such fastidiousness could not be claimed by all.[2]

When every morsel of food had disappeared from Atlanta a store was opened to barter provisions for munitions of war, minie balls, being especially desirable. Troops of women visited the battlefields, dug the lead, pellet by pellet from the frozen earth and painfully carried their heavy baskets to town to be emptied and refilled with food. Famine had been so close to them that such an opportunity seemed to them an Aladin's lamp which banished want.[3]

But lead mines were not available just outside every city, and in several, bread-riots[4] were the culmination of the desperate want of a certain class of women. In September, 1863, the women of Mobile collected on a certain road under banners on which was printed such devices as, "Bread or Blood," and "Bread and Peace," Armed with knives and hatchets, they marched down the principal business street,

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did not complain. One little fellow said to his mother, "Mama I have a queer feeling in my stomach. Oh, no, it doesn't ache the least bit, but it feels like a nutmeg grater!"--Pryor, p. 283.

1. "We had spent the preceeding day in picking out grains of corn from cracks and crevices (of the).....troughs for Federal horses as well as gathering rye what was scattered upon the ground." ---Gay,p. 207. "Mr. Campbell's children picked up the grains wherever the army horses were fed."

2. Pryor, passim.

3. Gay, p. 260-267.

4. "Bread-riots are becoming common in the South; they are led by women armed with hatchets. Several have occurred in North Carolina."--Canton Weekly Register, April, 1863.

breaking open the stores and appropriating such articles of food and clothing as they found.[1] In Richmond,[2] even earlier, much the same thing had occurred. A thousand women broke into the stores on the principal streets. They took not only clothes and food, but jewelry, glassware, furniture—anything they found. They were dispersed by the militia, only to reassemble. The Charity leaders claimed that the Riot was incited by Union influence—not caused by want.[3] Another authority, however, happened on the "mob" while quietly gathering in a park. A young girl, a dressmaker's apprentice, whose appearance revealed how close she was to starvation told him that as soon as enough got together they were going to the bakeries, each to take a loaf of bread. "We are starving," she said simply. "The crowd rapidly grew until it reached the dignity of a mob—a bread riot. They impressed all the light carts they met and marched along quietly and in order.....visiting the stores of the speculators, and emptying them of their contents.....They did not really deserve that Governor Letcher should send the mayor to read the Riot Act. They were only hungry, and so a thousand of them loaded carts with bread for their children." In sharpest contrast to the sufferings of women compelled to take bread by force,[4] were the lives of a circle of wealthy women known as the "court;" it was composed of the

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1. Reb. Rec. Diary of Events, V. VII. p. 48.

2. The Richmond papers never mentioned this affair; we learn of it from letters and diaries.

3. McGuire, p. 202-3.

4. It was commonly said that the deserters from the Confederate armies went home to care for their starving families. Especially toward the end of the war, when the outlook for their country was dark, they could not remain when they knew their children would starve unless they returned.

wives of President Davis' civil officials, and those of certain military officers.[1] The zeal and enthusiasm of many of these ladies for their country was sincere; but it did not occur to them to sacrifice creature comforts. Indeed many of them felt that gay parties with music, laughter, wines and a goodly company were the best of cheer for the soldier boys who were about to go back to the field. They felt with Judge Semmes, that it took high courage to keep up the wonted social life, when, as in Richmond, the sound of cannon, and the echo of shot and shell, could be heard night and day.

But the majority bitterly resented what they judged waste and frivolity. "They appear crazed with the pursuit of gayety," was the charge of one diarist[2] in January of 1865. "In the midst of wounded and dying, the low state of the commissariat, the anxiety and trouble..... of the whole country, I am mortified to say that there are gay parties.[3]..... where the most elegant suppers are served--- cakes, jellies, ices in profusion and meats of the finest kinds in abundance--such as might furnish a meal for a regiment of Lee's army." The recorded menus of these dinners, picnics and parties sound as tho taken from a land of peace and plenty. The Christmas dinner served by a general's wife to her guests in 1863 consisted of "oyster soup, besides roast mutton, ham, boned turkey, wild duck, partridge,

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1. Neither Mrs. Lee, her daughters, nor the wives of many of the great generals were seen at the receptions of the "court."

2. McGuire, p. 328.

3. These elegant affairs are not to be confused with the "Starvation Parties" that were common. Young people met together to dance and have a good time, but not a morsel fo food was served. Nor was it "the thing" to be gowned in any but the simplest or most ancient frock.

plum pudding, sauterne, burgundy, sherry, and maderia." "There is life in the old land yet."[1] the lady ends triumphantly--she was a famous hostess, and her guests remembered that dinner. "Ices, chicken salad, oysters and champagne" were served at a party a few days later. The same week that the bread riots occurred, such delicacies as oranges, guava jelly, champagne and cake appeared on some tables.

To be sure, nothing is easier to find than contrasts in living; one need not go to a beleaguered city in war time to find the drama of the Little Match Girl being enacted. The remarkable thing thruout this period is the contrast in the lives of the same social group. Women reared under the same circumstances, used to the same luxuries, lived as differently as can be imagined. Some wealthy women continued to consume that wealth in luxurious living. Other wealthy women sacrificed personal comfort for the good of the country. For here as always the personal equation entered. One girl might send gold to France and receive in return a trunk of foreign fabrics.[2] But another could write. "Do you realize that we shall soon be without a stitch of clothes? There is not a bonnet for sale in Richmond. Some of the girls smuggle them, which I for one, consider in the worst possible taste. We have no right at this time to dress better than our neighbors, and besides the soldiers need every cent of our money.[3]

Mrs. James Chesnut and Mrs. Roger A. Pryor, city women of the same social rank, are excellent examples of the difference in personal reaction to the war. Each had lived and traveled extensive-

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1. Chesnut, 268, 274, passim. Mrs. Jefferson Davis, Mrs. Ould, Mrs. Toombs, Mrs. Chesnut were prominent hostesses.

2. McGuire, p. 196.

3. Pryor, p. 226, 227.

ly abroad; each had been a popular member of Washington official society; the husband of each was a general in the Confederate army, and each was on terms of intimacy with such people as the Davises, the Lees and the Johnstons. And each in her own way was full of love for her country.

Mrs. Chesnut's diary reveals a charming, spontaneous, hospitable woman continuing under some difficulties the elegant life she had always lived. Forced to move from Charleston, to Richmond, to Montgomery—and back again, she was always a woman of society in the true sense. She dined, she supped, she breakfasted on the fat of the land. She read Thackery's latest novel, the last scientific publication, French drama or German poetry. Her eager mind followed every political and military move of the day, and to name the men with whom she discussed them would be to call the roll of Confederate fame. She hired nurses for the hospital—even gave her own services for a short time. After a reception she and her friends sometimes piled a carriage full of delicacies and drove to the hospital with their tribute.

Mrs. Pryor, on the other hand lived in the very heart of the war. She sewed untiringly for the woldiers; she nursed them twelve hours a day in the hospitals. Her household linen of every kind, and much of her personal clothing she contributed for bandages. She and her little children lived in a hovel on the scantiest provisions during the winter in which her baby was born. Afterwards, she counted it comfort when flour, rice, peas and dried apples, with a little grease extracted from bones, were all that could be found in her cupboard. At Christmas time she resolved that the children should have a treat; she purchased a piece of corned beef, and boil-

ed it with peas. But when she saw a company of forlorn soldiers passing the door, she and her children sent the dish out to them.

Mrs. Chesnut, however, bemoaned the lack of variety when her table was set with terrapin stew, gumbo, fish, oysters in every shape, game and wine. Eggs, butter, hams, game, and fruit were supplied from her country home. "Week-end parties were given at Mrs. Chesnut's country home, where, after dancing, a meal would be served as good as mortal appetite could crave; the best fish, fowl, and game, and wine from a cellar that cannot be excelled."[1]

Mrs. Pryor, while her husband was a prisoner of war, supported herself and family all the winter by concocting new garments for the Richmond shops from a trunkful of ante-bellum finery. She established quite a glove manufactury by using her husband's dress-coat; there was the broadcloth material, watered silk lining, and gray flannel interlining.[2]

The luxuries demanded by such women as Mrs. Chesnut were supplied chiefly by lockade runners. Admiral Porter captured a blockade runner whose valuable goods included many commissions for ladies "at Court," including a pile of bandboxes, marked with the owners' names. "These bonnets, laces and other vanities," said Admiral Porter, "rather clashed with the idea I had formed of the Southern ladies, as I heard that all they owned went to the hospitals, and that they never spent a cent on their personal adornment. But human nature is the same the world over and ladies will indulge in their little vanities in spite of war, and desolation."[3]

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1. Chesnut, p. 251.
2. Quoted by Pryor, p. 314.
3. Ibid p. 319.

As opposed to the women "who used their means to smuggle in finery, were those who contributed their jewels and gold to build gunboats, and fortifications. Early in the war the women of Alabama contributed $200,000 for the construction of a gunboat to protect the Alabama river.[1] The Aid Society at Pontotoc, Mississippi, contributed their jewelry, gold and silver plate to the Confederacy--and resolved to urge other women to do the same thing.[2] In the Spring of 1865, women brought their jewelry and plate to the Treasury at Richmond to help redeem the currency or support the soldiers.[3]

And thus, tho the evidence shows that there was some love of display, some extravagance, and some eagerness for gay excitement, the majority of Southern women undoubtedly exhibited devotion to the Confederate cause by abstaining from luxuries, and by giving their means to the soldiers; or, exhibited it no less, by bearing privations with a stout heart, and working hard to meagrely support themselves.

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1. Stevenson, p. 89.
2. Reb. Rec. V. I. p. 98.
3. McGuire, p. 341: cf. Pryor, p. 343: Jones, V. II.p.453.

III.

Their Services for the Soldiers.

Many have felt that, tho the women of the South did unquestionably bear great hardships, they bore them only because the fortunes of war forced them so to do. Since they had sincerely foreseen a speedy and brilliant victory, they had been eager for war. Had they foreseen hardships and disasters, would they have been so eager? So willing?

To be sure, these women did not—could not—realize, the extreme intensity of suffering that was in store for them; but many of them were able to realize the probable course of events clearly enough to make intelligent preparation-with self-forgetting enthusiasm.

"We are very weak in resources," writes one woman,[1] as early as May, 1961, "But strong in stout hearts, zeal for the cause, and enthusiastic devotion for our beloved South. While men are making a free will offering of their life's blood on the altar of their country, women must not be idle.....The embattled hosts of the North will have the whole world from which to draw supplies; but if, as it seems probable, our ports are blockaded, we shall indeed be dependent on our own exertions, and great must those exertions be."

Within a month, the same diary describes the revolution that had taken place in the luxurious Virginian's elegant manner of living. Desserts were no longer seen on their tables. Tho the soldiers were supplied lavishly, personal indulgence was regarded as unpatriotic. Virginia did not secede until April, 1861; yet months before

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1. McGuire, p. 13.

the secession this writer declared that there was not a woman in her borders who would not give up everything but the bare necessaries of life for the good of the cause.

In Mississippi, likewise, a feeling of the stern nature of the struggle early manifested itself. On a plantation of 4000 acres and 200 slaves, retrenchments for the sake of the soldiers were begun when the first regiment marched away. The three grown sons joined the army, but the father and the six daughters helped "the cause" in another way. Though luxuries were yet abundant in the land, they lived no more luxuriously than the soldiers. Though cotton crops brought $30,000 on this plantation, from now on they planted only corn. The army could not get a sufficient supply of blankets, so half the household store was sent off to camp together with great boxes of food and wine. Gray cloth was ordered up from New Orleans and under the direction of the daughters, uniforms were made by the dozen.

From the first, indeed, the government recognized the women as its right hand in supplying soldiers with clothing. In August, 1861, the Governor of Tennessee issued an Appeal to 'Patriotic, Mothers Wives and Daughters.[1] As the customary market was shut off he urged that "patriotic women set to manufacturing all the jeans, linseys, socks, blankets, comforts, and all other articles that will contribute to the relief, health, and comfort of the soldiers in the field."

To most of the women, such an appeal was carrying coals to Newcastle. "To be idle was torture."[2] Women everywhere resolved themselves into sewing societies that rested not even on Sundays. Sew-

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1. Rec. of Rebellion, V. III. Doc. 2.
2. Pryor, p. 132.

ing machines were put into churches, that became depots for flannel, muslin, strong linen and uniform cloth; nothing could be heard in them for days but the click of machines, the ceaseless murmur of voices questioning and voices directing work.[1]

As the number of soldiers in the field increased, the women increased their responsibilities. The newspapers tell of the organization of Sewing Societies, Knitting Associations, Hospital Aid Societies, Nursing Clubs. It would seem that every large city formed organizations for certain definite work. Two associations in New Orleans proposed to ade and equip volunteers, make lint and bandages, nurse the sick and wounded.[2] The women of Mobile organized to make sand bags for defense, and undertook the care of the families of volteers which were left without adequate support.[3]

Zealous as were the organizations, they could accomplish only a small part of the work done by women. Tho Sewing Societies were everywhere,[4] the sewing done when they met together was but a small part of the work of endless garment making. That was the formal time set aside for it; but between every other duty women sewed—or knitted.

With them it was no subterfuge; it was sharp necessity in order to clothe their families and the soldiers.[5] They knitted everything; not only the usual garments, but entire suits of clothes were made of this fabric.[6] From daylight until dark, and far into the

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1. North Carolina Bulletin, 16, p. 15.
2. Baltimore Sun, May 7, 1861 (Diary of Events, Reb.Rec. V. I. p. 56.)
3. Ibid. V. I. p. 58.
4. Hague, p. 106. These sewing societies met once a week to work on soldiers' clothing. The members brought all the cloth that could be spared from their own households and made it up into all sorts of articles for the soldiers' comfort.
5. Mrs. Jefferson Davis, Jefferson Davis, p. 207-209.
6. Some busy women set themselves a "stint" of a sock a day

night that task, like Penelopi's, was a never finished one. One woman knitted 1028 yards of cloth in one year, besides socks and gloves for the soldiers. Mrs. Robert E. Lee and her daughters made 196 pairs of socks and gloves for one brigade--and this when Mrs. Lee was confined to her chair by rheumatism, and the time of her daughters was consumed by hospital service.

By unremitting labor, the Confederate women were able to send a constant stream of blankets, clothing, socks and shoes to the Confederate soldiers. Conditions were such that the Government, tho it exerted every effort was not able to clothe him properly; and had it not been for the efforts of the soldier's wife, his mother and his sister, he would indeed have been not only tattered and torn, but naked.[1]

Sewing and knitting; making bandages and lint for the soldiers were practically universal occupations of Southern women. Country women and city women, rich women and poor women had a part in them. But the other great service for the soldiers, that of nursing them when sick and wounded, fell on those who lived in the regions where fighting was going on. Here the paramount and ever present duty was either service in the hospitals, or care of the sick in some other way. There was work for every one, and every one met it with enthusiastic willingness.[2]

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1. Recollections of Judge W. D. Wood, in the Gulf States Historical Magazine, V. II., p. 108.

2. McGuire, p. 118: p. 169: cf. Chusnut, p. 224-5.

Sisters of mercy, Jewish girls and protestants;[1] gently reared ladies, the mountaineer women, and negro "mamies" worked side by side in the hospitals. After a battle, every house would be opened for the wounded—it has been estimated that after the battle of Seven Pines 5,000 wounded men were cared for in private houses.[2] Richmond women went in their carriages for the wounded to carry them home and nurse them[3]—the bedrooms, halls, drawing rooms and verandas of stately houses were often crowded.[4] All the larger cities had several big hospitals, to which, after every battle, trains broughtloads of wounded men. The women and children of every village and hamlet thru which they passed, would meet them with refreshments—hot tea, coffee, milk soup, everything that they could obtain.[5] At every station on the 300 mile journey from Corinthto Mobile, women met the trains of wounded men with provisions of all kinds. They dressed wounds, and assumed the care of those so badly wounded as to be unable to continue the journey.[6] This latter service was most important for the men lying on the floor of box cars, or waiting long hours because of faulty railway connections, suffered terribly.

It was this custom of tending the wounded at wayside homes, that led the women of Columbia, South Carolina to originate a Wayside Hospital. It was so successful that the idea spread over the

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1. Richmond Enquirer, June 6, 1862. (Underwood, p. 118.)
2. Pryor, p. 171: McGuire, p. 48.
3. Chesnut, p. 173.
4. Pryor, p. 171: McGuire, p. 48.
5. McGuire, p. 176.
6. Stevenson, p. 185, 186.

South as an institution. At all railway junctions, Wayside Hospitals appeared, opposite, or near the railway station. In them the soldiers on their way to the large hospitals, had their wounds dressed, their ailments attended to, and very frequently their clothing renewed by the patriotic volunteer nurses. Those men most severely wounded proceeded no farther, but remained to be cared for.[1]

As the war went on, the capacity of the established hospitals was severely taxed. Churches, universities, academies, and ware-houses were pressed into service. These hospitals were almost entirely dependent on volunteer service; volunteer matrons, volunteer nurses, and often a volunteer comissariat. All were willing enough, but usually far from efficient. Difficulties were insuperable. The wards were filled to overflowing; medicines were contraband--blockade runners could not supply the demand;[2] ice was almost unheard of; and work as they might, Southern women could not make bandages and lint fast enough to meet the need.[3]

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1. Mrs. Chesnut, p. 205-206. The Columbia Hospital, small as it was cared for 7,500 men during the war. Sometimes a Hospital would be built by public subscription, as was done at Miller, Georgia. This one had four large wards, and a large dining hall at the rear, and did good service for two years before being destroyed by Sherman. (Underwood, p. 108.)

2. Smuggling, for which the Southern woman was so much blamed, was oftem undertaken to bring in medicines, and anaesthetics to the hospitals. "The fashions of the day included a small round cushion worn at the back of a lady's belt, to lift the heavy hoop and many petticoats.....It was called "a bishop" and was made of silk. These were brot home from a visit to friends at the North, "filled with quinine and morphine. They were examined at the fromtier by a long pin stuck thru them. If the pin met no resistance, they were allowed to pass."

3. Pryor, 181-185.--Whole stores of household linen were often contributed. Table cloths, sheets, and dimity counterpanes---and even chintz furniture covers.

In these hospitals misery was so bare that compassion was speechless. The nurses had to become accustomed to the grewsome sights, the sickening odors, the long hours. Their novitiate was short. "At the end of a week the matron had promoted me! Instead of cutting fat bacon to be dispensed with cornbread for the hospital dinner, or standing between two rough men to keep away the flies, or fetching water, or spreading sheets on cots, I was assigned to regular duty with one patient."[1] They had regular hours--for instance "seven to seven during the day with the promise of night service if needed." These hospitals were at times left with no physician in charge, and the most delicate nursing was required of inexperienced women.[2] The inevitable result of such handicaps was suffering and great loss. "Many fine young fellows lost their lives for want of prompt attention.....They would give way to those who seemed more seriously wounded than themselves; the latter would recover, while their own slight wounds became gangrenous from delay.[3] Delay in reaching the hospital often made amputation necessary for gangrene had set in. An operation, was itself, however, almost equally fatal, for tetanus followed speedily. It was said that eight out of ten died where amputations were performed.[4]

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1. Pryor, p. 187.

2. A young man had been wounded in the eye, loosening and shattering the ball, but it was held to the socket by ligaments that had to be cut by the most delicate surgical instruments. On the absence of the surgeon, the nurse had to remove the ball with her finger tips, cleanse and dress the wound daily, until the surgeon came. This same nurse cared for a man whose skull had been shattered, exposing the brain and proud flesh was developing. The nurse tended him with the most exquisite care until proper aid arrived. Both men recovered and went back to the field.

3. Pryor, p. 185.

4. Stevenson, p. 177.

The Hospital in the State University at Oxford, Mississippi[1] was typical of the many in small towns thruout the South. The townswomen were assigned as nurses to the different wards, and to duty in the kitchens preparing the food for the hospitals. The nurses would carry with them from home, soups, broths or whatever they could contribute to the hospital rations of cornbread and bacon. The country people of that, and even of surrounding counties, sent in wagon loads of provisions—a community making up a wagon load each week.[2]

Emergency calls were the order of the day in the lives of many women. Sometimes a retreating force had to leave its wounded on the field in the care of a few physicians; they would go to the nearest town, appeal to the women (the men were all off to war,) for aid on the battle field, and return with a volunteer corps of nurses.[3] One woman, hearing of wounded Confederates some distance away, was going on horse back to their aid, when the animal became frightened, threw her against a rocky ledge, and badly injured her. She made her way to them nevertheless, had them conveyed to a church in her town, where they were nursed until recovery.[3]

The work of nurses in the field hospitals was unending. They moved on from hospital to hospital with the line of battle, apparently fearless of danger or disease.[4] If they were delayed in

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1. Miss. Hist. So. V. 12, p. 95. The Hospital at the Univ. of Vir. (McGuire, p. 163.) and that at Selma, Alabama, (Stevenson p. 189) were managed very like the one at Oxford.

2. McGuire, p. 48-63: Before the country had been raided by Federals, wines, brandies, vegetables, fowls and clothing made up the load. But after Grant or Sherman had passed by the people divided their scanty store of bacon and cornbread to send the wounded men.

3. Southern Historical Papers, V. 6. p. 218.

4. Erysipelas, pheumonia, typhus and typhois fever, and measels, in a severe form, were the complications for the 5,000 wounded after the battle of Corinth.

coming, affairs in the improvised hospitals went badly indeed. The patients were unruly, careless of themselves and their male attendents. But the arrival of "a corps of nurses.....acted like a charm; order emerged from chaos, and in a few hours all looked cleaner and really felt better from the skill and industry of a few devoted women who .....sacrificed every personal comfort to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and wounded.[1]

If the Confederate soldier would have gone unclothed but for the Confederate women, he must, just as surely, have been destroyed by wounds and disease except for her ministrations. Indeed, the real fighting strength of the South lay in its women as well as in its men.

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1. Stevenson, p. 178

V. Their Spirit.

The things that Southern women did—all of them—might have been done perfunctorily; done because necessity pressed and for no other reason; done with bitterness of soul at the doing. On the contrary, every task, every service was performed with a passionate intensity of spirit which beautified it for them.

The Southern woman was a woman of mettle. When war came, and came in her case with unusual honors, she met it, not with mere passive fortitude, but with aggressive spirit. That spirit was confined to no one group. Women of every class, of every condition, shared it. They took it for granted that every man should volunteer. They cheered on the enlisted men: their enthusiasm for the soldiers marching away was boundless; but that did not mean that they felt the men to be doing anything less than their merest duty.

Nothing awoke the withering scorn of these women as did the man who failed to respond or sought to evade his duty. They dubbed them "Druthers" because such men said they'd"druther not fight, they'd druther stay at home....."[1] Between the enemy before him and the women behind , the South was no place for a coward.

In one of the North Carolina communities, the young ladies hinted for sometime to a robust young laggard that he should volunteer. Finally, their patience over tried, they sent him a note saying that if he did not at once enlist they would plait their garters into a

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1. Ripley, Eliza, Social Life in Old New Orleans, p. 266.

whip and scourge him from the place.[1] When the fiancé of a charming girl declined to join a company on account of his approaching marriage, she, hearing of his refusal, sent him a package, containing a lady's skirt and crinoline and a laconic note, "Wear these or volunteer." He volunteered.[2] This attitude became so general that the custom grew for girls to postpone engagements until their lovers had fought the Yankees. "You distinguish yourself in the war and then see what I shall have to say to you!"they said to the men.[3]

They saw no bravery in the young man who preferred home duty to service in the field. In Vicksburg the women scornfully posted bulletins which ran, "To arms! To arms!—there will be a meeting of the young ladies of Warren County to be held at Bovina on Thursday, 18 inst. for the purpose of joining themselves into a Home Gaurd for the protection of those young men who will not volunteer for the Country's Cause."[4]

A woman in Virginia was left alone at home, her husband and ten sons all being in the army. To a suggestion that it must be lonely for her she replied that it was hard; but if she had ten more sons, every one of them should go to the army.[5] The three sons of another woman were in the army; her husband, over age, was not strong enough to march; "but I tell you what you can do," she said to him---"you can drive a wagon in the place of a young man that's driving, and that young man can fight."[6] One old lady of North Carolina said of her

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1. Bul. 16, North Carolina Historical Com., p. 12.
2. Stevenson, p. 194
3. Pryor, p. 130: cf. Jones, V. I, p. 33.
4. Rec. of the Rev. V. II., p. 57.
5. Underwood, p. 195.
6. McGuire, p. 98.

eight nephews, "I can tell you that not a man of my family would I let stay at home in peace if he was able to tote a musket. I said to them, boys, all'er you go long to the field whar you belongs, and if any of you gits sick or is wounded, you may depend on you old Aunt Abby to nuss and to tend you."[1] Not only then, but thruout the course of the war, women insisted that men volunteer. Even when such insistance meant the nearest sacrifice a woman could make. A Tennessee woman with five sons in the army, and only a young lad at home with her, met the news of her eldest son's death with, "God's will be done, Eddie will be fourteen next spring. He can take Billy's place.[2]

The conviction that every man should fight for his country did not subside in these women when physical suffering from hunger might have been remedied by the return of the bread winner. Men who oould not obtain furloughs, sometimes went home without furloughs. "Technically they were deserters, but really they were fathers gone wild. In most such cases the wives and mothers drove them back with tears and entreaties."[3]

Nor did this spirit sink as disaster thickened; if anything, it burned more fiercely. Even as late as 1865, and officer in General Sherman's advancing army replied to a woman protesting at the conduct of his men, "You women of the South keep up this war. We are fighting you. What right have you to expect anything of us?" And General Sherman himself paid tribute to the same spirit when he said to the women of Savannah. "You women are the toughest set I ever

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1. Bulletin 16, p. 12.
2. Ibid, p. 12.
3. Ibid, p. 12-33, cf. Underwood, passim.

knew. The men would have given up long ago but for you. I believe you would keep up this war thirty years."[1]

If Southern women were possessed of such a spirit toward their own men, it is but the other side of the shield to say that toward the invader, or his sympathizer, they manifested active hate. If they were brought in direct contact with him, there is often a robustness about their manner of dealing, somewhat startling. In Virginia near the Tennessee line, a "Tory" slandered the widow of a deceased Confederate Soldier, whereupon a half dozen women, soldiers' wives and widows, tied him up and administered twenty stripes.[2] When the Confederates were pursuing the retreating Federals, the women saw a Union officer making his way thru Fredericksburg. They chased him, captured him and locked him in a room until Confederate troops arrived. A young woman who had been arrested for assisting Confederate prisoners to escape framed as her "certificate of good behavior a note from General Butler describing her as an incorrigible little devil, whom even prison fare won't tame."[3] An officer uninvited entered the home of a quiet girl, and, after fruitlessly trying to engage her in conversation, requested her to play the piano. As she refused, he rose, and began to play the instrument himself. The girl siezed an axe and smashed the piano. Nothing of hers, she said should afford him pleasure. Such women even spat at the Union men when they passed on the street.[4]

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1. Bulletin 16, p. 12-33; cf. Underwood, passim.
2. Reb. Rec., V. 7, p. 20.
3. Underwood, p. 141.
4. Dawson, p. 78

Tho the sense of wrong elicited such expressions of defiance from certain women, they were frowned upon and condemned as utterly without breeding by others,[1] who kept themselves quietly at home, doing nothing to expose themselves to insult. "For my own part," says one, "I tread my own path, utterly ignoring them."[2] But even these gentler women flashed fire when pressed. A young woman was in one of the tents set aside for Confederate wounded, writing a letter for a dying soldier, when she was interrupted by a young Yankee surgeon, to whom she was a perfect stranger, putting his head in and remarking pertly, "Ah, Miss D _____ are you writing? Have you friends in Richmond? I shall be there in a few days and will with pleasure take your communications." She looked up calmly into his face and replied, "Thank you; I have no friends in the Libby."[3] Another girl had become very tired of hearing Federals abuse John Morgan, tho, as it happened, she did not know Morgan at all. One day the abuse was worse than usual, and she grew restive. By way of putting a mark against so rude a girl the Yankee officer said, "What is your name?" "Write Mattie Rudy now, but by the Grace of God one day I hope to call myself the wife of John Morgan.[4]

Sometimes, affronted beyond endurance, the gentlest and most open minded women were seized with bitterness hardly to be exceeded. A girl of Baton Rouge whose fair mindedness won her the dislike of the townspeople thus expressed herself in her Diary when she heard of

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1. Dawson, p. 78.

2. Letter of Mrs. Mary A. Fontaine, In Confed. Cal., p.250.

3. McGuire, p. 280

4. Chesnut, p. 242-3, John Morgan heard of this, sought her out and she became Mrs. Morgan.

Butler's famous Order 28.[1] "And so, if any man should fancy he cared to kiss me, he could do so under the pretext that I had pulled my dress from under his feet! That will justify them! And if we decline their visits, they can insult us under plea of prior affront---Come to my bosom, O! my discarded carving knife, laid aside under the impression that these men were gentlemen! We will be close friends once more. And if you must have a sheath, perhaps I may find one in the heart of the first man who attemps to Butlerize me!"

The same girl comments on her own unfamiliar spirit—that spirit which is so vividly revealed while she is writing, "This is a dreadful war to make even the hearts of women so bitter. I hardly know myself these last few weeks. I who have such a horror of blood shed.....I talk of killing them! For what else do I wear a pistol and carving knife? I am afraid I will try then on the first one who says an insulting word to me. Yes, and regret it forever after in sackcloth and ashes. O! if I was only a man.....If some few women were in the ranks they could set the men an example they would not blush to follow. Pshaw! there are no women here. We are all men!"[2]

It was not in the South alone that Southern spirit was to be found. Women who had lived in the North but who had been born in Dixie were filled with a desire to help the land of their birth.

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1. Dawson, p. 35-36. The order itself is quoted in Underwood;"As the officers and soldiers of the U. S. have been subjected to insult from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans in return for the most scrupulous noninterference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall be word, gesture or movement insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the U. S. she shall be regarded, and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation.
By Command of Major General Butler."

2. Dawson, p. 24.

The aid they could best render lay in spying and conveying information to the South. True, if they were unsuccessful they were promptly confined. In 1862, the"16th Street" in Washington was filled with political prisoners. After several months the worst offenders were sent beyond the Union lines; they had confessed that they "were engaged in forwarding letters, papers, and information to the rebels. They would not give their source of information, and "all refused to take the oath of allegiance or even give a parole of honor not to aid the enemy."[1]

But not all spies and purveyers of information met with disaster. Many successfully brought information of all kinds and acted as smugglers of needed commodities. The wife of a Federal clerk, after he had left Washington for the Southern service hid letters, dispatches and drawings of fortifications in her underdress, and successfully crossed the lines.[2] One girl ("as gentle and genuine a woman as the South contains" the newspaper said) reached the Potomac safely and found a boat; but the negro boatman refused to cross,for fear, he said, the Yankees would shoot him. The girl replied that she would shoot him herself if he didn't cross. The negro quailed and rowed her to the Virginia side, where she managed to reach her friends in the darkness of the night. This girl brought all kinds of valuables with her; besides having her petticoats quilted with

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1. Reb. Rec. V. III. p. 57, cf. Philadelphia Press. Reb. Rec. V. II. p. 57, 68. One of these women steadily refused, while in prison, to sleep under a blanket marked "U.S."

Brigadier General Chesnut, said the Confederacy owed a debt it never could pay to Mrs. Greenlion (one of these women). She warned them at Manassas, "and so they got Joe Johnston and his Paladins upon the stage in the very knick of time." Chesnut, p. 176.

2. N. Y. Times, July 1, 1861. In Reb. Rec. V.II., p. 72.

quinine, her pockets filled with spool cotton and papers of needles and pins, she had a satchel full of money and papers.[1] A southern sympathizer in Washington allowed herself to be captured with a body of Federal pickets. She was, of course, taken before the Confederate general, where she quickly made known her partisanship for the South by letting down her loosely coiled hair, taking out some papers, and passing them over. She gave the commander a code of signals, and explained that from a certain point her house in Washington could be seen. She would signal him by different arrangements of the holland shades. She was returned to the Union lines with word that the Confederates did not make war on women! Thereafter the Confederates seemed to have an almost preternatural knowledge of the enemy's movements.[2]

Girls living in the South rendered, of course, much the same sort of service when the opportunity offered. One girl, when Sherman was on his way to Atlanta rode thru the storm of a winter's night to give valuable information to the Confederate's-even tho the country was filled with skirmishing soldiers and she came home in danger of being hit by flying shot and shell.

In many such instances it seems probable that mixed with the heroism for country was a daredevil spirit of adventure for its own sake. Possibly this admixture became more pronounced in the case of women, garbed as men who enlisted and served thru the war, an occurrence which was by no means rare.[3] But there was little spice of adventure in the service most women rendered their war-torn country.

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1. N. Y. Times, July, 1, 1861. In Reb. Rec. V.II., p. 72.
2. Underwood, p. 148.
3. Reb. Rec. passim.

The fierce and bitter spirit toward the enemy became gentle and self-abnegating toward friends. Often it showed itself in personal service. When the services to the soldiers are mentioned the larger things—nursing[1] and the making of clothing are usually thought of; but that does not include the many kindly acts done for the pleasure or ease of the soldiers. A soldier in speaking to a friend, remarked that nothing kept up the spirit among the men like letters from their women friends. "And cheerfulness makes better soldiers, does it not?" she asked catching at the suggestion. Thereupon she went home, made a list of all the men with whom she was acquainted in the smallest way, and from that day until the end of the war she wrote one letter a week to each, a task which, as her acquaintance was large, taxed her time and strength severely. She urged a like course upon others, and many women adopted the suggestion.[2]

When bundles of socks,[3] or other clothing were prepared for camps, the donor enclosed a letter written "for the edification, mental improvement and amusement" of the boys.[4]

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1. Again and again women, for whom all the glamor of nursing must have long since disappeared, revealed the spirit within them by bewailing their inability to give more time to the soldiers. One older woman, who did clerical work in the morning, said in her Diary "I am now obliged to visit the hospital in the afternoons and I give it two evenings in the week. It is a cross to me not to give it more time.....I never see a soldier with out feeling disposed to extend my hand and say, "God bless you." A girl who was obfiously wearing herself down in nursing felt that the soldiers needed her too much even to stop for a day.--McGuire, passim.

2. Underwood, p. 106

3. Gay, p. 133. In contrast to the struggle to supply necessaries after the war was well started was the exuberance of supplies which the women gave at the beginning of the war. "There was absolutely nothing which a man might possibly use that we did not make for them. We embroidered cases for razors, for soap and sponge, and cut morocco affairs for needles, thread and courtplaster, with a little pocket lined with a bank note. 'How perfectly ridiculous! ' do you say? Nothing is perfectly ridiculous that helps anxious women bear their lot---cheats them with the hope that they are doing good."

4. Gay, p. 42-47.

The Southern woman was a self-abnegating woman. A blind woman groped her way to the Richmond hospitals from day to day and quieted the patients with her guitar and songs.[1] One girl sat all night on the chilly ground holding in her lap the head of a nerve-racked, wounded man in order that sleep might save his life. The exposure cost her weeks of illness which she cheerfully bore. A woman filled her house with soldiers, ill with fever, and nursed them. Her children then contracted the fever, and tho they recovered, the mother herself worn out, at length fell ill with it and died.[2]

In addition to these positive sacrifices, the Southern women often revealed her self-abnegating spirit in negative ways that frequently proved tragic. Some abstained from such foods as could not be shipped to the army, and lived only on such perishable foods as could not be used for soldiers' rations. Mustard greens and buttermilk, with cornbread now and then was the fare of one plantation household toward the end of the war for all their meat and meal were sent to the soldiers. One of the young girls of the family confessed that she was hungry for meat. "but I musn't eat it, and I won't. you see the army needs all the food there is, and more. We women can't fight... and so we are trying to feed the fighting men...We've made up our minds not to eat anything that can be sent to the front as rations....." A month or so later this girl died.[3]

To supply the rations that the soldiers wanted so sadly, was a constant problem; it was never answered satisfactorily.

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1. Gay, p. 133.
2. Southern Historical Papers, V. 25, p. 330.
3. Underwood, p. 99.

Thruout the war it was often suggested, impractically enough, that the women cut off their hair to raise funds; "and there is not a woman, worthy of the name of Southerner, who would not do it, if we could get it out of the country and bread and meat in return."

The spirit of self-forgetfulness did not fail these women even at the end of the war when hopes were shattered, and the hour of surrender was come. The end of the struggle completed the ruin that its progress had wrought. During the war the thought of triumph at the end, lightened their labor and suffering. The soldiers, marching away, "waved their hats at the crowds of women and children, shouting, "God bless you ladies! We will fight for you!" and they, waving their handkerchiefs, sobbed with one voice, "God bless you, Soldiers! Fight for us!"[1] Now the remaining few of those who had marched away, came back, tattered, footsore, dispirited; came back to desolated homes,--no home had escaped sorrow.[2] But their wives greeted them with undimmed courage and sweet resolution. They roused their men by words and deeds to repair their wasted fortunes. Hardships and toil were far from ended. Numbers of women were left as the sole support of young families. But they spared time to

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1. Dawson, p. 27.

2. "When you meet people, sad and sorrowful is the greeting; they press your hand; tears stand in their eyes or roll down their cheeks, as they happen to possess more or less self-control..... We have no breathing time given us....the proportion of trouble is awfully against us....A woman heard her son was killed, and, had hardly taken in the horror of it, when they came to say it was all a mistake in the name. She fell on her knees with a shout of joy. "Praise the Lord, O my soul!" she cried, in her wild delight. The household was totally upset, the swing-back of the pendulum from the scene of weeping....In the midst of this hub-bub the hearse drove up with the poor boy in his metallic coffin. Does anybody wonder so many women die? Grief and constant anxiety kill nearly as many women at home as are killed on the battlefield."---Chesnut, p. 178.

remember their dead. In 1866, the women of the South began the custom of decorating the soldiers' graves. The women who had toiled, who had served, who had starved for their country, now remembered their own and their country's dead; their pious act inaugurated[1] the beautiful custom of honoring, all over this country, those who fell in the Civil War.

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1. Pryor, p. 274: cf. Bulletin 16.

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